

Commonwealth of Kentucky
Employee Educational Assistance Program
(Effective June 1, 2002)

Educational Assistance is a benefit to both the employee and to the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The program provides financial assistance to employees to continue their formal education, which results in an improved workforce and helps the employee achieve his or her individual career goals. Educational assistance generally is provided for formal education programs that are taken on the personal time of the employee. All cabinets and agencies are encouraged to participate in this program.

I. Authority

The authority for the Educational Assistance program for employees of the Commonwealth of Kentucky is KRS 164.357, which created the Governmental Services Center and provided for its duties and responsibilities. Executive Order 2004-728 abolished the Governmental Services Center and established the Office of Government Training (OGT). OGT is responsible for issuing, administering, and interpreting this policy.

II. Policies

A. Sources of Funds

Funds for payment of educational assistance must come from the agency's budget. Agency participation and degree of availability to employees depends on the availability of funds as determined by the agency.

B. Payment of Funds and Educational Sources

Educational assistance provides for the payment of funds directly to the educational institution by the agency after the employee has received prior approval for the course from the agency's Appointing Authority or designee.

Educational providers can be public or private degree granting postsecondary education institutions, educational television, accredited correspondence and on-line schools, secondary schools, and Kentucky Virtual University.

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Educational testing for credit such as GED, CLEP, and DANTES are also covered by this policy.

The dollar amount per credit hour approved for educational assistance at a private college or university or an out of state college or university shall be limited to the current tuition cost at the four (4) year state university located nearest the employee's county of employment.

C. Eligibility Requirements

Permanent, full-time employees who are in active work status and who have satisfactorily completed the initial probationary period, or employees in the unclassified service who have completed six months of continuous service, are eligible to receive educational assistance. These requirements may be waived by the agency for specific cases when the nature of the work justifies the educational assistance.

An employee who has an outstanding reimbursement obligation for any of the reasons explained in Section I is not eligible to receive further educational assistance until the obligation satisfied.

D. Courses Must Be Related to the Employee's Work

The courses must have a clear and direct relationship to the work of the agency and to the improvement of the employee's job effectiveness in his or her present position or a position in the agency to which he or she can reasonably aspire. The appropriateness of courses is to be determined by their presence on the Approved List of Courses and Degree Programs for the agency for which the employee works; or by the fact that the course is a degree requirement for a degree program which is on the approved list of courses and degree programs for the agency for which the employee works.

Exception According to Personnel Cabinet

Under KRS 18 A and 101 KAR, an agency's appointing authority may grant tuition assistance or reimbursement to employees for courses that MAY NOT qualify an individual to meet the minimum requirements for a job outlined on the official Class Specification. Agencies and employees should check with the Department of Personnel to determine if the course, degree, etc. qualify to meet the current minimum requirements outlined on the class specification. This does not

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guarantee that the minimum requirements will not change at a future date based on changing job needs.

E. Approved Lists of Courses and/or Degree Programs

1. Based on the recognized educational needs of the workforce in the agency, the agency shall establish lists of courses and/or degree programs for which the agency may grant educational assistance. Different approved lists may be established for work units, job classifications, or a combination of the two.
2. The approved list(s) shall be distributed so that all employees have access to the list.
3. The agency shall periodically review the list and make revisions as necessary and appropriate.
4. Requests for exceptions to the approved lists shall be made in writing and subject to the approval of the agency Appointing Authority or designee.

F. Kentucky State University Requirement

Employees who live in or whose work station is in Franklin or an adjoining county will receive educational assistance only for courses at Kentucky State University (KSU) unless the course or degree program required is not available or offered there. This policy is based on *Kentucky's Higher Education Desegregation Plan* in response to the *U.S. Office of Civil Rights Letter of January 15, 1981, Final Revision*, January 1982. This policy shall apply uniformly unless the Executive Director of the Office of Government Training waives the requirement for a particular course subject to Section K of these policies.

G. Approved Expenditures

1. Educational assistance may be granted to pay for tuition and other related expenses including:
 - a. Registration fees.
 - b. Laboratory fees.
 - c. Basic and normal costs charged by the institution required for course registration.
 - d. Computer usage fees.
 - e. Required texts and other required course supplies.

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- f. Examination fees.
- g. Records and transcript fees if required by the institution.

2. The agency shall indicate in writing which, if any, additional fees shall be covered, and they shall be covered uniformly.

H. Maximum Courses Allowed

Agency-paid tuition and related expenditures shall be applied uniformly throughout the agency and shall not exceed the following:

Undergraduate studies – three (3) courses for each regular session and one (1) course for each summer or inter-session.

Post-graduate studies - two (2) courses for each regular session and one (1) course for each summer session or inter-session.

I. Obligation of the Employee

1. The employee shall continue to work on a full-time basis. Agencies are encouraged to accept the use of paid leave and flexible work schedules to accommodate the employee's participation in this program provided it does not adversely impact services or employee job performance.

2. The employee shall sign the educational assistance form, which includes an agreement recognizing the employee's obligations. The agency is authorized to recover educational assistance monies expended if:

- a. The employee's authorization form contains any material falsification.
- b. The employee fails to provide the agency, within thirty (30) calendar days after completion of the course, evidence of a satisfactory grade. Satisfactory grade is defined as a "C" for undergraduate work and a "B" for graduate studies. A grade of "I" (incomplete) is not considered a satisfactory grade. A grade of "Pass" is considered a satisfactory grade.
- c. The course(s) is (are) dropped, regardless of cause, without prior approval of the appointing authority or his/her designee.
- d. The employee receives duplicate payment for the same course from any other source (e.g., scholarship, veteran's educational payments, Educational

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Achievement Award). Courses taken through the Educational Assistance Program cannot be applied toward an Educational Achievement Award.

e. The employee resigns/retires or is dismissed for cause prior to completion of a six (6) month service obligation to state government after completion of the course or during the course itself. An employee who is laid-off shall not be obligated to the six (6) month service obligation clause and shall not have to repay educational assistance funds.

J. Records and Forms

The agency shall maintain all records and forms associated with this program in the agency personnel file of the employee and shall forward such records to the receiving agency upon employee transfer.

Agencies may utilize Educational Assistance Authorization Form P33, or a similar form adapted to the needs of the agency, and shall publicize an application process for employees to follow.

K. Exceptions in the Public Interest

Exceptions to these policies may be granted when justified as being in the public interest by the appointing authority and approved by the Executive Director of the Office of Government Training. Requests for exceptions must be submitted in writing by the appointing authority or designee stating the nature of the exception being requested, the reasons for it, and an explanation as to why the exception would be in the public interest. Requests for exception must be received by OGT at least 10 workdays prior to the start of the course for which the exception is requested.

L. Equal Opportunity

Decisions regarding educational assistance shall be made without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability or age.

M. Periodic Audits

The Office of Government Training at Kentucky State University reserves the right to audit educational assistance records within the agencies to ensure compliance with the policies stated herein.